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March 4, 2016

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## TESTIMONY

### HB 5457, AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICTS AND HEALTH DIRECTORS

TO: Members of the Public Health Committee

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Board of Health of the Central Connecticut Health District (CCHD).

CCHD is one of 20 regional local health departments in Connecticut, also known as "health districts". CCHD serves nearly 98,000 people in our 4 member towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield. It is governed by a Board of Health made up of our District Director of Health, who is hired by the Board, and 11 Board members appointed by each of our four member towns to staggered three-year terms.

#### Time Commitment of Directors of Health

We support Section 1 of this bill with new language that clarifies the "full-time" requirement for district directors of health and brings it in line with the language for municipal directors of health.

#### Bonding of District Directors of Health

We suggest deletion from Section 1 of the sentence,  
*"Such director shall give to the district a bond with a surety company authorized to transact business in the state, for the faithful performance of [his] such director's duties as treasurer, in such sum and upon such conditions as the board requires."*

While this language was appropriate in 1963 when the statute was written and the first health districts were forming, it is not so at this time. Health districts carry liability coverage for this purpose. Further, most health districts now waive the requirement for a surety bond from the district director of health they employ and cover this with a rider under the agency's umbrella insurance policy.



Public Health  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Testimony to the Public Health Committee - HB 5457**

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Supervision and Oversight of Local Health Departments

We oppose the addition to Section 2 of the bill which reads,

*"The commissioner shall provide close supervision and oversight to the local health departments."*

This proposed language contradicts the authority of district boards of health authorized under Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-241. Further, for city and municipal health departments this language contradicts what is in most city and town charters regarding municipal authority over local directors of health and their local health departments.

In Connecticut all local public health is decentralized and separate from the Connecticut Department of Public Health. As we indicated earlier, in the case of the 20 health districts in Connecticut, such as ours, the agency is governed by a board of directors, whose members are appointed by its member towns. As health district board members we are accountable to our member towns for the agency and its performance. Governing board responsibilities include: assessing public health needs; determining the overall direction for the Health District and the services it provides; developing both agency and public health policy for the jurisdiction; establishing and enforcing public health regulations and ordinances; overseeing the district's budget and financial affairs; employing a Director of Health for a three year term as the chief executive officer; and working collaboratively with the Director on all the above.

Because the authority to implement and enforce many state public health statutes and the Connecticut State Public Health Code is delegated by the Commissioner of Public Health to the local directors of health, the appointment of directors of municipal health departments by their mayors/first selectmen or other local appointing authority (Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-200), and the appointment of health district directors by their district boards of health (Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-242), has always been subject to approval by the Commissioner of Public Health. This is appropriate and authorized in state statute.

However, the proposed language for "close supervision and oversight" is not. The overall responsibility for a municipal health department rests with the city or town. For health districts it rests with their governing boards of health. We urge deletion of this sentence.

We would be happy to provide further information on any of the above. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Sincerely,

Judith A. Sartucci, MSN, RN  
Chairman  
Board of Health

Charles K. Brown, Jr., MPH  
Board of Health Secretary/Treasurer  
and District Director of Health